

Learning and Teaching Support Charter

Introduction

This Charter is for all students studying on a taught course at the Ulster University including campus, blended and distance learning programmes. It underlines the University's commitment to the development of a partnership in learning and the provision of an enriching learning experience for its students. It sets out what you can expect from the University and what we expect of you in relation to the teaching you will receive, how you will be supported in your learning and in relation to assessment.

Getting started:

Beginning your studies can be both exciting and daunting. There is a wealth of information provided for you and, at the same time, you may be moving away from home, making new friends and/or learning how to balance work and study. The University endeavours to make this transition period as smooth as possible and to help you settle into your studies. You should familiarise yourself with the information provided and ask questions to ensure that you fully understand your course structure, how it will be taught and assessed, University regulations and how they apply to you, and the resources which will be available to you.

You can expect:

- that we will create a welcoming environment to help you settle in, meet other students and prepare for University learning;
- provision of induction opportunities for all new students giving you information about your course and University facilities such as our library, computing facilities, support services and digital technologies;

Access, Digital and Distributed Learning (ADDL) hosts the University's Virtual Learning Environment (BBLearn) and supports campus, blended and distance learning students in partnership with Faculties and Departments of the University. ADDL also provides a suite of tools, technologies and services to support and enhance learning and teaching across the University. Blackboard Learn support is available from ADDL via the support wiki, blackboard learn help desk and online induction resources.

- provision of Course or Subject Handbook(s);
- access to a quality University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) (Blackboard Learn) <http://learning.ulster.ac.uk/>

At induction (which may be on campus or online, dependent on study mode) and/or in your Course/Subject Handbook, you will:

- receive an introduction to your course;
- be advised about the online induction to the University VLE (BB Learn) and support services for the use of the VLE;

- be advised of the staff who are responsible for teaching on your course and details of how they can be contacted;
- have access to an online course support area which includes key University and course specific information;
- be advised of the name and contact details for your designated Adviser of Studies;

Your Adviser of Studies will give you general advice regarding the University environment and guide you in matters affecting your choice of optional modules, curriculum content, assessment, progress, and study and examination skills.

- receive the aims and learning outcomes of the course you are studying;
 - be made aware of the choices of modules available to you;
 - be informed about the learning and teaching methods that will be used to develop both academic and generic skills throughout the course;
 - receive details of how you will be provided with information on your progress on an individual basis;
 - be made aware of the methods by which you will be assessed overall, and by module, and the criteria that will be used;
 - receive details of any professional recognition available on successful completion of your course.
- that we will provide opportunities for the development of generic skills to facilitate your learning and to enhance your overall performance.

What we expect of you:

- that you check your registration details and report any errors or omissions immediately. This is particularly important as it enables you to use the Student Portal to access resources for your course, such as information made available through the VLE, and to obtain examination results;

The Student Portal is your personalised gateway to many of the online services provided by the University such as email, online library services, the University's VLE, personal support services and PACE. It will act as a point of focus for messages sent to you by your faculty and announcements from other University departments. The web address is:

portal.ulster.ac.uk

- that you make yourself familiar with the information provided to you and seek clarification of anything you do not understand;
- that you participate in induction opportunities provided for you.

Continuing your studies:

All Faculties will provide high-quality teaching and academic guidance and will continually strive to improve the quality of provision. Staff will seek to provide a

supportive environment to assist students to take responsibility for their own learning.

You can expect:

- that we will provide courses and programmes which are informed by research, scholarship and professional practice;
- that you will be given information about the relevant timetables for lectures, tutorials, online learning activities and other classes and that you will be provided with reasonable notice of changes, wherever possible;
- that we will assist your transition to University and through your period of study with us;
- that we will provide a safe, yet challenging learning environment that supports students to engage and learn with fellow students from diverse backgrounds and identities;
- that we will assist your transition to learning via the VLE and will provide flexible and accessible programme and learning provision in anticipation of your changing needs and study patterns.
- that the approaches to teaching, learning and assessment will offer opportunities for you to pursue and develop your strengths and enthusiasms and, where appropriate, encourage imaginative engagement with subject matter;
- that we will provide a range of learning and teaching opportunities which may include lectures, seminars, tutorials and workshops (on campus or online), some of which may involve groupwork. The purpose and format of these will be explained to you. The combination of different learning experiences is designed to enable you to engage actively in your own learning and meet all the learning outcomes of your course;
- that the University will continually seek to enhance the quality of its provision and that the teaching you receive will be subject to peer review and feedback from students;
- that we will provide opportunities to engage in collaborative learning to develop sharing of practice and create a sense of a learning community;

Collaborative learning is learning that involves students working with others and learning together. It encourages active learning, encourages questioning, discussion and debate, creates an understanding of how you learn and enables different skills, viewpoints and experiences to be applied to a task.

- that, as part of your programme of study, you will have opportunities to develop attributes that will strengthen your employability and enhance your career management skills;

The University can help you with study skills which will aid your learning and improve your performance. The Skills+ resource <http://adl.ulster.ac.uk/skills+> covers a range of issues from helping you to manage your time, improving referencing skills and developing research skills. Contact your Adviser of Studies for more information on how you can access these.

- that we will provide opportunities for small group learning;
- that we will help you gain an understanding of ethical behaviours and learn productive resolutions to problems for current and future needs;
- that assessment will be used as a means of promoting student learning as well as providing evidence of that learning

Assessment is used not just to determine how well you have performed but also as a means of facilitating and validating the learning process. A wide range of assessment methods, including working in groups, oral and practical assessments as well as projects, class tests, essays and examinations, may be used to develop your skills and broaden your learning. Although most of the assessment will be conducted by your tutors, some may be conducted by your peers, particularly if a task involves collaborative learning or groupwork.

- that the University will seek to ensure that marking of all assessments is fair and free from bias.
- that you will be provided with regular feedback on your academic progress. Feedback will highlight the strengths exhibited in work submitted for assessment and will draw attention to areas that may benefit from further development;

Feedback may be provided in various ways and will include comment on formative stages as well as on work submitted for summative assessment. Feedback may be oral (for example, comments of a general nature made to a class or group), written (to individual students) or provided online (to groups or individuals). Feedback from tutors may be supplemented by peer feedback.

- that you will be informed of penalties for late submission or non-submission of coursework and the consequences of failure to attend classes and examinations;
- that you will be offered advice and information in relation to choices you may have regarding your study and the implications for future opportunities;
- that we will provide opportunities, as appropriate, for work-related and work-based learning;
- that you will have opportunities to prepare you for living, working and/or studying in an international context;
- that external examiner reports will be shared with you via your online course support area

Many of our courses involve placement opportunities and/or include work-related learning enabling students to apply their learning through case studies, discussions with guest lecturers from industry and project work.

What you can expect from Access, Digital & Distributed Learning:

- *that you will have timely access to a quality VLE once registered with the University;*
- *that we will provide you with opportunities to receive training and access technical support, including the VLE helpdesk and support wiki;*
- *that the VLE will provide opportunities to simplify and improve assessment submission and feedback;*
- *that we will offer flexible frameworks for continuing professional development and credit accumulation*

What we expect of you:

- that you will attend for designated lectures, training programmes and assessments, and actively participate in tutorials and other timetabled activities and meetings - for example, coursework tasks, seminars, practicals, online discussions and field trips;
- that you will ensure that you are punctual in attendance at classes and other designated activities as a courtesy to other students and staff;
- that you take responsibility for actively engaging in, and reflecting on, your learning and conduct ongoing self-evaluation. Self-assessment is a vital part of the learning cycle and will assist your planning and preparation of work.
- that you will submit or present all written assignments, practical or other coursework within the specified time limits;
- that you reflect on feedback received and use it as a platform for future development;
- that you will complete any appropriate forms and take part in seminars relating to your progress as required by any regulations applying to your form of study;
- that you will attend all requisite examinations;
- that you will not plagiarise. Plagiarism is an offence and carries penalties which may affect successful completion of your course;

Plagiarism is the act of taking or copying someone else's work, including another student's, and presenting it as if it were your own work.

- that you will check regularly for communications from the University received electronically, by post, by email or through the student portal, or placed on notice-boards;
- that you will take responsibility for your online presence and use digital technologies to enhance your learning experience and develop your graduate qualities;
- that you will provide us with feedback on your experience by completing the on-line student survey for each module that you undertake. This will be available through the Student Portal and/or the VLE BBLearn at the end of each semester and forms an important part of our ongoing enhancement activity;
- that you will notify your tutor, supervisor or other appropriate staff at the earliest opportunity if you are unable to attend classes and/or if there are extenuating circumstances which prevent you from satisfying any of your course requirements, and subsequently complete any requisite documentation;
- that, if you are also working, you will develop good time-management skills to ensure you are able to attend scheduled activities and undertake the necessary independent learning;

- that you will contact your Adviser of Studies as early as possible if you are considering either withdrawing from your course or transferring to another course to discuss the financial and academic implications.

Academic support:

You can expect:

- that you will be provided with opportunities to make contact with your Adviser of Studies to discuss your progress and obtain advice on future study choices and further support available;
- that we will provide studies advice/peer mentoring systems which meet your needs;
- that staff in Student Support will be available to advise in confidence on any academic difficulties that you may be experiencing;
- that we will provide you with opportunities to engage in Personal Development Planning (PACE).

Information on other services and support available can be accessed from the following:

Careers: <http://careers.ulster.ac.uk/>

Library: <http://library.ulster.ac.uk/>

Personal support: www.studentsupport.ulster.ac.uk
(including counselling, childcare, financial advice)

Virtual Learning Environment: www.portal.ulster.ac.uk

Students' Union www.uusu.org

What we expect of you:

- that you avail of opportunities provided to meet your Adviser of Studies and that you seek support from him/her whenever you need advice or support;
- that you take the opportunities offered for Personal Development Planning (PDP);
- that, if you are having difficulties, you raise them with a member of staff such as your Module Coordinator, your Adviser of Studies or your Course or Subject Director. It is important to raise issues of concern as soon as you can as it is often easier to resolve difficulties at an early stage. You can also raise issues through your class representative;

Class representatives are elected by the student body for some courses and they attend Staff/Student Consultative Committees on your behalf. Online training is provided through the VLE for all class representatives. You can ask your class representative to raise issues on your behalf. Other courses may invite all students to attend.

You can also seek advice, support and representation from your Students' Union. Contact the Vice-President (Education and Welfare) at the Students' Union on your campus or online via www.uusu.org.

Effecting Change:

Students have an important role to play, in collaboration with staff, in contributing to the shaping and ongoing development of the University's vision and to the continuous development of our courses.

Your course will provide you with an opportunity to raise issues with staff during each semester, normally through the Staff/Student Consultative Committee. This forum provides opportunity for you or your class representative to raise issues or offer suggestions about the delivery of a course and make changes during the semester.

The University surveys student views regularly, usually at the end of each module. The results of these surveys are analysed and considered carefully by the University. As the questionnaires are often anonymous, you may not receive an individual response from the University but your views will be considered along with those of other students, so that improvements can be made.

The University also participates in the National Student Survey which is a survey of students who are about to complete their period of study. The survey is conducted for all UK Universities and results are available for Ulster and for other Universities. Future students use this information to decide which courses to apply for so it is important that you provide information to help them make that decision. The survey is open to all final-year undergraduate students in February/March and is publicised around the University and online.

Changes to courses

Changes to courses are normally made through a cyclical review process. It is occasionally necessary for the University to update courses during their delivery or to make other changes. Changes to courses may only be introduced for existing students following consultation with current student representatives.

In exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to close courses. Where this is necessary, current students will be informed as soon as practicable explaining the reasons for the closure. Every effort will be made to ensure existing students will continue to complete the course for which they have enrolled on the same campus. Students will be kept informed of any changes and supported to complete their studies.

Measuring our performance:

One way in which we measure our performance is through the National Student Survey. We strive to meet or exceed the UK average in all areas and, in particular, how you rate:

- overall satisfaction with the quality of your course;
- overall satisfaction with the teaching on your course;
- whether feedback on your work has been prompt;
- whether you have received detailed comments on your work;
- whether feedback on your work had helped clarify things you did not understand;
- whether you have received sufficient advice and support during your studies.

The complete results of the survey for Ulster and other UK universities are published on www.unistats.com.

Other useful information:

For more information on your course and staff, use your Faculty's webpages:

Faculty of Art, Design and the Built Environment	www.adbe.ulster.ac.uk
Faculty of Arts	www.arts.ulster.ac.uk
Faculty of Computing and Engineering	www.compeng.ulster.ac.uk
Faculty of Life and Health Sciences	www.science.ulster.ac.uk
Faculty of Social Sciences	www.socsci.ulster.ac.uk
Ulster Business School	www.business.ulster.ac.uk

The University has a Student Charter and other associate charters which cover:

- Information Services
- Library
- Student Support (which includes counselling services and services for students with disabilities)
- Career Development Centre
- Residential Services
- International Students
- Research Students

These can be accessed from: www.ulster.ac.uk/studentcharter/